

and an asset to the 11th District of North Carolina, and I am honored to share her award winning remarks with all of my colleagues.

"DEMOCRACY—ABOVE AND BEYOND"

(By Erin Watson—1996-97 VFW Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program)

Who in his right mind could even consider building an industrial park in the middle of our beautiful mountain valley? The county commissioners talked like it was a done deal, and it looked like the project would be railroaded through, when the question arose, what do the people of that area think? At the public hearing, citizens from all over the county spoke emotionally against it, 10 to 1. But, when the meeting ended, it appeared that the people of this valley could not be heard.

"Why should we bother to have such a meeting?" I asked my Dad. "Did anybody say anything that mattered? Who says we have such a great country?"

Many times I have wondered why my ancestors would sell all, leave family, and suffer greatly to come to America. I have imagined their joy when into view came that tall shining figure standing on the shore with her torch held high, offering warmth, safety, and freedom. It must have been this light my ancestors sought for the promise of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." But on this night I wondered, why this country? What burning desire pushed them forward at all costs? And what did they see here that I was not seeing as I learned more about our democratic system?

Then I was given the chance to spend a month in the country of Russia. I really wasn't searching for answers when I moved in with Masha and her family in Rostov. But soon I could see everywhere people would give all for that precious gift of freedom. My Russian Mama and Papa warned me not to be opinionated in public. The freedom of speech I understood was not practiced nor allowed, Papa gently explained. I also discovered that the creativity of school students was very limited, and they were not taught how, but what to think. All students studied American History, and most of them knew English. I thought about the little Russian History I knew, and marveled that they would learn all they could about my country. It soon became apparent that these students harbored a hope of going to America, and prepared for that day.

As time passed, I began to long for my home in America, where I knew I was safe and free. Masha and her family hugged me tearfully as I boarded the departing train. I waved from the window as Masha ran alongside the train, calling "I will come to America." Then she was out of sight. I longed to take my Russian friends with me, fulfilling their lifelong dream.

On the trip home, I reflected on those brave people who saw and followed the light of America's democracy. I felt like my ancestors embarking on my own journey to freedom. My family laughed as I hugged the ground in my yard. How could they know of the pride and love I had for my country, and the newfound respect for her democracy? I, too would have given all to come home to America.

I have learned that to be an American is more than simply partaking of the freedoms we enjoy. It is our right and obligation to be a working part of our democracy, which is truly a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" of America. I understand my part in keeping democracy's light burning bright, so others can enjoy these same freedoms. I know I must encourage others to show their love for America

and take an active part in our democracy, too.

And, when I have a family of my own, I will share my experiences as I teach them to respect and love their country and the principles on which she was founded. I will teach them to be proud to be governed as a free people, and to be willing to defend and serve whenever needed. I will teach them to speak out when issues affect their homes and lives. I will teach them to vote, and be active in their communities so our light may continue to shine. I will point to our beautiful valley, and recount the events that caused the county commissioners to swallow their pride and abandon the industrial park project. I will proudly explain how the voice of the people was heard in our community, and how our democratic system worked again.

At last I do understand why America is the place my ancestors turned for hope. It is the shining light of democracy, the freedom to be what each person wishes to be. It is the freedom to succeed, and be useful and needed in a society that fosters individual creativity, and allows each person his full potential. And it is the promise that the next generation can have a better life than the last, if we uphold the values and statutes that our ancestors sacrificed for and loved so dearly.

For my friend Masha and those like her around the world, we must continue to hold our democratic ideals high. We cannot bring other nations to democracy, but we can lead so that all may see and want to follow. American Democracy, like that shining statue, does stand as a light above all others, and reaches out to those far beyond its borders.

THE MELISSA INSTITUTE FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 10, 1997

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment for its grassroots efforts in turning a tragic loss into something constructive for others.

Melissa Aptman was brutally murdered on May 5, 1995, just 2 weeks before she would have graduated from Washington University in St. Louis, MO. A charming and gifted young woman, she was taken from her family, friends, and society by a senseless, violent crime. Melissa grew up in Miami and was a graduate of the Dade County public schools. While in college, she worked for the school newspaper, mentored an inner-city student, participated in sorority affairs, and sat on the Panhellenic Standards Board.

Days before her death, Melissa wrote about violence against women on a college exam. "Such acts," she wrote "attempt to break the human spirit and destroy the state of mind of those involved." She added that "In spite of the brutality imposed on them women almost always find some source of strength."

Melissa's family has drawn strength from her words. They believe that we cannot let evil win. As a result, they have turned their grief into action, launching their own battle against violence and its devastating impact on victims and their families by creating the Melissa Institute in her honor.

The mission of the Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment is to bridge

the gap between expert knowledge of the nature and impact of violence and the practical application of this knowledge. Their first major conference on violence and youth will be held on May 2, 1997, in Miami, FL.

We must work together to fight evil and violence.

PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE CORAL REEF FISHING PRACTICES WORLDWIDE

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 10, 1997

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the United States and the United Nations should condemn fishing practices that are harmful to coral reef ecosystems and promote the development of sustainable coral reef fishing practices worldwide.

Coral reefs are vital to the environment and the economy of many island and coastal nations. They are among the most biologically diverse and productive ecosystems on Earth, rivaling the tropical rainforests on land. The hard structure of the reef is built up over thousands of years by the secretions of the tiny living coral animals. So, a coral reef is truly a living structure. And, as a living structure, thousands—perhaps millions—of individual coral animals are dying and others are taking their place on the reef at any one time.

The problem is that now human activities have shifted that balance and coral reefs are dying off at an alarming rate worldwide. Corals are very sensitive to water pollution, sedimentation, damage from boat groundings, and even simple physical contact by divers. These largely inadvertent injuries are a significant cause of the well-documented decline of coral reefs worldwide. Coral reefs are, in a sense, the canary in the coal mine of the oceans.

A great deal of injury is being inflicted on coral reefs, mainly in Southeast Asia, through easily preventable, largely illegal fishing techniques. Cyanide, other poisons, and surfactants like dishwashing liquids, are being used to stun and capture fish for the aquarium trade and for the live food fish trade. These chemicals kill nearby coral, and divers scrambling to get fish out of nooks and crannies in the reef often inflict further damage on the reef. Although illegal virtually everywhere, dynamite is still being used on some reefs to stun or kill fish. Afterwards, they float to the surface where they are easily harvested. The effect on the reef is obviously devastating. Most of the aquarium fish captured in this way end up in hobbyists' tanks in the United States. Most of the live food fish end up on plates in the homes and restaurants of Southeast Asia.

Although the State Department, NOAA, Department of the Interior, and other agencies are working, through the International Coral Reef Initiative, to identify and reduce threats to coral reefs, they need our help. These kinds of unsustainable fishing practices would not be occurring if powerful market forces were not at work. United States and Asian consumer demand for reef fish is, in part, driving the destruction of coral reefs. Yet how many aquarium hobbyists would purchase a wild-caught

reef fish if they truly understood that in doing so, they were aiding the destruction of the reef environment that they sought to reproduce in their tank. Furthermore, if affordable alternatives to wild-caught fish were available, wouldn't the educated consumer choose them? This has worked very well in the exotic bird trade; we could do the same for reef aquarium specimens.

Many of the countries where the reefs are being destroyed—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and others—have laws on the books protecting their reefs. But there is little money for enforcement, and the more lucrative the market, the more people are willing to risk the penalties in any case. So the keys are information and education. Only by identifying these destructive practices and the consumer demands that drive them can we begin to eliminate or modify them. And only through the development of sustainable coral reef fisheries can the reefs be saved.

That is what the resolution I am introducing today seeks to do. It is intended to raise the issue of these destructive fishing practices and associate them with the consumer demand that is driving them. It is intended to bring this issue before Congress and before the United Nations, raise the level of awareness of policymakers, and ask us to do more. The scientific and environmental communities have declared 1997 the International Year of the Coral Reef. We cannot stop ships from running aground on reefs and we may not be able to stop global warming. But what better time for us to pay attention to the global plight of coral reefs, and seek practical solutions to those threats that we can address. If we don't do something soon, there may not be any reefs left to save.

300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BELLEVILLE REFORMED CHURCH

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 10, 1997

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention the outstanding achievement of the 300th anniversary of the Belleville Reformed Church, of Belleville, NJ. As one of the oldest churches in America, I have the honor of being its Representative in the U.S. Congress.

Founded by Dutch settlers in 1697, the Belleville Reformed Church was originally known as the Old Dutch Church of Second River, with its first pastor being Reverend Berthoff. Throughout its history, the church had undergone several structural improvements. Records indicate that the Belleville Reformed Church's original building was replaced in 1725. In 1804, a tornado ruined that building and as a result, in 1807, a new edifice was dedicated.

As church membership grew, there was a need for new construction and in 1853, the present building was dedicated with the fellowship hall being added in 1895. The dedication of the building included the presentation of several memorial windows which are still in the buildings. In 1915, the present 8-rank pipe organ was purchased with matching funds from the Carnegie Foundation. The console of the organ has since been replaced but the pipes are the original.

In the past as in the present, the congregation of the church has demonstrated the ability to work together with the community and other faiths. When the new buildings were being replaced, church services were permitted in the neighboring Episcopal Church. In turn, the church allowed for services to be permitted in its building by Episcopal and Methodist churches. Even today, the church is shared with the First Hispanic Reformed Church. Relations with the community have also been generous with the anniversary of the township of Belleville being held in the church. On every Memorial Day, services are held, and the church bells are rung at the conclusion of the services, keeping with tradition begun in 1890, when the town requested that the bells be rung.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me, our colleagues, the congregation of the Belleville Reformed Church, and the township of Belleville, in recognizing the historic tradition of the Belleville Reformed Church and its many important contributions to the community. For its 300th anniversary, it is only appropriate that the House recognizes the Belleville Reformed Church today.

STATEMENT OF THE DALAI LAMA ON THE 38TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIBETAN UPRISING

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 10, 1997

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, today—March 10th—marks the 38th anniversary of the Tibetan people's national uprising. It was on this day in 1959 that the people of Tibet, chaffing under a decade of repressive Chinese Communist rule and brutal occupation, rose up in a violent rebellion against the Chinese. It was a cry of a people whose religious institutions, whose educational institutions, and whose very way of life were being systematically destroyed.

The Chinese Government responded with savage brutality. Thousands were killed. Some 100,000 Tibetans fled their homeland and were given refuge in India and Nepal. Among those who were forced to flee their homeland was His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Since 1959 the Dalai Lama has lived in India, where he has continued to speak out and work on behalf of the people of Tibet—those still living in Tibet under Chinese rule and those in exile in India and elsewhere. Despite the violence and repression that he and his people have suffered, the Dalai Lama has become a voice for peace and nonviolence. In recognition of this outstanding contribution, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Mr. Speaker, as we mark today the 38th anniversary of the Tibetan people's national uprising, I ask that the statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama be placed in the RECORD. I urge my colleagues to read it. This gentle man of peace has again spoke with great wisdom, great force, and great integrity. His message is one that is important for all of us to understand.

STATEMENT ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIBETAN NATIONAL UPRISING—MAR. 10, 1997

(By the Dalai Lama)

In the closing years of the 20th century, as we commemorate the 38th anniversary of the

Tibetan people's National Uprising, it is evident that the human community has reached a critical juncture in its history. The world is becoming smaller and increasingly interdependent. One nation's problem can no longer be solved by itself. Without a sense of universal responsibility our very future is in danger.

Today's problems of militarization, development, ecology, population, and the constant search for new sources of energy and raw materials require more than piece-meal actions and short term problem-solving. Modern scientific development has, to an extent, helped in solving mankind's problems. However, in tackling these global issues there is the need to cultivate not only the rational mind but also the other remarkable faculties of the human spirit: the power of love, compassion and solidarity.

A new way of thinking has become the necessary condition for responsible living and acting. If we maintain obsolete values and beliefs, a fragmented consciousness and self-centered spirit, we will continue to hold on to outdated goals and behaviors. Such an attitude by a large number of people would block the entire transition to an interdependent yet peaceful and cooperative global society.

We must draw lessons from the experience we gained. If we look back at the development in the 20th century, the most devastating cause of human suffering, of deprivation of human dignity, freedom and peace, has been the culture of violence in resolving differences and conflicts. In some ways, our century could be called the century of war and bloodshed. The challenge before us, therefore, is to make the next century a century of dialogue and non violent conflict resolution.

In human societies there will always be differences of views and interests. But the reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue. The promotion of a culture of dialogue and non-violence for the future of mankind is thus an important task of the international community. It is not enough for governments to endorse the principle of non-violence or hold it high without any appropriate action to promote it.

With these convictions I have led the Tibetan freedom struggle on a path of non-violence and have sought a mutually agreeable solution to the Tibetan issue through negotiations in a spirit of reconciliation and compromise. Inspired by the Buddha's message of non-violence and compassion, we have sought to respect every form of life and abandoned war as an instrument of national policy. For us Tibetans the path of non-violence is a matter of principle. And I am convinced that this approach is the most beneficial and practical course in the long run.

As we commemorate this anniversary, we look back at yet another year of escalating repression in Tibet where the Chinese authorities continue to commit widespread and grave human rights abuses.

Under the "Strike Hard" campaign launched by the Chinese authorities in April last year, Tibetans are subjected to increased torture and imprisonment for peacefully expressing their political aspirations. Political re-education conducted by the authorities in monasteries and nunneries throughout Tibet have resulted in mass expulsion, imprisonment and death. I continue to be concerned about the fate of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the boy I have recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama, and whose whereabouts are still not known.